

ACTION WHA-00

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RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)

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| INFO | LOG-00 | NP-00 | AID-00 | AMAD-00 | CIAE-00 | INL-00 | DODE-00 |
| | DOEE-00 | PERC-00 | DS-00 | EB-00 | E-00 | VC-00 | H-00 |
| | TEDE-00 | INR-00 | IO-00 | L-00 | VCE-00 | AC-00 | NSAE-00 |
| | OIC-00 | PA-00 | MCC-00 | PRS-00 | ACE-00 | P-00 | FMPC-00 |
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 FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8113
 INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY
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 NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 003270

NSC FOR CBARTON
 USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/25/2014
 TAGS: PHUM, PGOV, KJUS, VE
 SUBJECT: CONVICTIONS IN USON AND TACHIRA CASES

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ABELARDO A. ARIAS FOR REASONS 1.4 (d
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 Summary

1. (U) On October 13 a court in Tachira State convicted eight persons on charges of rebellion in relation to the events of April 2002. The court found on of the original nine defendants not guilty, and five of them are free one probation. On October 11 a military court convicted retired Army Gen. Francisco Uson for insulting the Armed Forces and sentenced him to five and a half years in prison. Journalist Ovidio Rodriguez, professionally known as Napoleon Bravo, who faces charges for disparaging comments about the Supreme Court he made on his television program, testified October 13 before the prosecutor leading the investigation. End Summary

 Tachira 8 Guilty

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
 CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
 DECLASSIFY AFTER: 9 JUN 2026
 DATE/CASE ID: 19 FEB 2009 200705281

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2. (U) The trial against nine political leaders in Tachira State for civil rebellion ended at midnight October 13, when the court found eight of the defendants guilty of civil rebellion, and freed one, Wilfredo Tovar. The court sentenced three of the defendants, Saul Lozano, Orlando Pantaleon and Danny Ramirez, to six years in jail and five others, Elsy Marquez de Pena, Jacobo Supelano, Jose Neira Celis, and Omar Guillen, to three years. The judge, Gerson Nino, granted the latter five probation, and they were set free on October 15. They may not leave Tachira State, may not speak to the media, and may not participate in political demonstrations.

3. (U) The case against the Tachira 9 stems from disturbances in front of the Governor's offices in Tachira on April 12, when a mob allegedly attacked Tachira Governor Ronald Blanco La Cruz to forcibly remove him from office. At the time the Governor was meeting with military and political leaders to decide what steps to take, following Chavez apparent resignation. Witnesses have described a confused situation, aggravated when military officers withdrew support from Blanco La Cruz, and allowed part of the mob into the Governor's mansion. The defense concentrated its argument on the question of whether the defendants led the crowd, or tried to restrain it. There are approximately 40 additional persons in Tachira who have formal investigations open against them for the same incident, including one general and several politicians. During testimony Blanco La Cruz testified that the persons most responsible for the crime were not on trial.

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Reactions

6. (C) Following his release, William Tovar made a public plea for President Chavez to pardon the eight persons convicted. He said it was time for Chavez to use his position to call for peace and reconciliation in the country.

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General Uson Guilty

7. (U) Separately, a military court found retired Army General Francisco Uson, former Minister of Finance, guilty on October 11 of insulting the armed forces , and sentenced him to five and a half years in prison. The charges stem from comments Gen. Uson made in a television interview in relation to the Fuerte Mara case of March 2004. In that case, eight soldiers received serious burns while in a punishment cell in Fuerte Mara, Zulia. Two later died. Gen. Uson responded to a journalist's questions about how a flame-thrower worked, and explained the procedures for signing one out, after journalist Patricia Poleo alleged a flame-thrower had been used to burn the soldiers.

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Napoleon Bravo Called to Account

11. (U) On October 13 journalist Ovidio Rodriguez,

professionally known as Napoleon Bravo, testified before prosecutor Luisa Ortega for four hours in relation to statements he made about the Supreme Court, in which he suggested the building would be better used as a house of prostitution. No formal investigation has yet been opened against Rodriguez.

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